

Moran Supports Israel's Right to Self-Defense

January 19, 2010

Madam Speaker, a year ago Israel was engaged in defensive operations to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks. In doing so, Israel was exercising the most basic right and responsibility of a state, to protect one's citizens. Troubling, many in the international community condemned Israel's actions. Many more refused to recognize Israel's right to self-defense.

As we begin this new year, I'm here to speak up for the right of sovereign nations to defend their people. Israel has a right to defend itself. The U.S., as a strong ally of Israel, must be vigilant in supporting this most basic right.

I just read a story in The Jerusalem Post about life in Israel a year after Operation Cast Lead. Before the war, Israelis were enduring relentless rocket and mortar attacks in Gaza. Terrorists launched more than 12,000 rockets and mortars across borders in Gaza at Israel's civilians over the course of 8 years. These rockets were not aimed at military targets, but the goal was to try to kill civilians and instill a sense of fear in the Israeli people.

Thousands of Israelis living within range of Hamas rockets had their whole lives changed. Locating the nearest shelter as they went around town became second nature to them. Israelis living in the time of Sderot have just 15 seconds from the time a warning is sounded to take shelter from missile attacks. Young children did not know that this way of life was not normal.

When I visited Israel last year, I had the opportunity to meet with several Israeli families from Sderot. They told me compelling stories about living under the constant barrage of terrorist activity and the challenges of raising a family under these conditions, yet their attitude was, This is our home. This is our community, and we are going to stay and surmount this adversity. The families under attack faced difficult circumstances, but they were not willing to give up on a place they considered home, nor should they have to.

Since Operation Cast Lead, things have improved for Israelis living within the range of Hamas rockets, yet we should know, the attacks still occur. Since the end of the war, there have been an additional 300 attacks. This is, of course, far less than the 3,200 attacks in 2008 but, still, 300 too many.

At the time the story in The Jerusalem Post was written, 242 attacks had occurred since the end of Operation Cast Lead. The writer said that it was both shocking and sad that her friends would say, Only 242 attacks. She asked, In what other country do you think that it's a reasonable number of rocket attacks aimed at civilian targets in 1 year? Any terrorist attack is unacceptable.

Israelis hope for peace. They do not want war or conflict with their neighbors, but peace is a two-way street. Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has reiterated Israel's commitment to peace. He has said that he is ready to resume peace talks now and without condition. He even placed a 10-month moratorium on the construction of new homes in the West Bank to jump-start the peace talks.

It is my sincere hope that Israel's willingness to make peace will be reciprocated and that the terrorist attacks will cease. But if attacks continue, Israelis must be allowed to defend their homes, and we in the United States must assist in that effort and support their basic right to do so.